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ABSTRACT

Seventy trustees of various California library boards responded to a questionnaire designed to determine how the trustees viewed their duties, whether they agreed as to their responsibilities, what they felt were their main functions, and what was the division of responsibilities between the board and the library staff. The questionnaire data suggested that the trustees felt their duties were to determine objectives, goals, and some policies; to define the role of the library in the community; and to consider carefully the financing of the library. They felt less concerned with public relations and membership in library associations. The trustees were not in agreement as to whether they should concern themselves with material selection and personnel policies, and the planning and execution of library programs. They did tend to recognize the importance of well qualified staff, inter library cooperation, state library services, library standards and trends, and that they would be aware of library laws and pending legislation. (LS)

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LIBRARY TRUSTEES' VIEWS OF THEIR DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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What do public library trustees actually perceive to be their duties and responsibilities? Are trustees largely in agreement as to their duties and responsibilities? Do they, in reality, accept the neat package prescribed for them in The Library Trustee?[1] What is their sense of priority in connection with their duties and responsibilities? What is their perception of the division between their area of action and that of the library staff?

These and other questions apparently have not been seriously approached in the literature of librarianship. Seemingly, trustees have meekly accepted what has been prescribed for them in a few sources.[2] At least, no one has apparently bothered to ask typical trustees their views on what they should do and think about in their roles relative to their libraries.

This article is a report of a survey undertaken late in 1972 of the views of a sample of public library trustees in California in regard to their perceptions of their duties and responsibilities, and the relative priority they attach to them. The instrument was, to a considerable extent, developed from Virginia Young's list of the parallel but differing areas of action for the library board and the librarian.[3] Several of the points given there were expanded upon by giving a series of statements approaching the point somewhat in the manner of an ordinal scale, with each statement suggesting an ordinal indication of the priority attached to that statement by the respondent. In addition, a number of related points were developed in the same way, for a total of thirty-five items. The full text of the instrument appears in the

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[1]Virginia G. Young, ed., The Library Trustee (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1969).

[2]Examples include: Anna G. Hall, The Library Trustee (Chicago: American Library Association, 1937); Marian C. Manley, A Handbook for Library Trustees, 2d ed. (New York: R. R. Bowker Co., 1959); and Virginia G. Young, The Trustee of a Small Public Library (Chicago: American Library Association, 1962).

[3]Young, The Library Trustee, p. 10.

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appendix to this article.

Each respondent was asked to provide certain information which might or might not ultimately be related in a statistical way to his responses on the questionnaire. This information included such items as length of service as a trustee, occupation, age, sex, level of educational attainment, and type of board.[4] In addition, a record was kept which permitted tabulation of responses according to the size of the library in terms of potential population served, a basic categorizing device used by the California State Library.[5] These have subsequently been referred to as the nominal categories.[6]

The sample was intended to be a representative one, including the middle name listed in the board for each library reporting that information in NNCL.[7] In fact, 125 questionnaires were sent, and usable responses were received on 70 of them. Since only a single effort was made to elicit a response, i.e., the original mailing, one might observe that 56 percent of this group of trustees found the matter of their views of their duties and responsibilities sufficiently interesting to take the trouble to respond quickly to a fairly lengthy and complicated questionnaire. The seventy respondents represented approximately 11.2 percent of the total population of trustees in California at the time.

Although some of the nominal categories considered, i.e., length of ser-

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[4]Three types of boards of trustees were defined in the instrument: administrative, nominally administrative, and advisory. See the Appendix for definitions of these as well as other categories.

[5]NNCL: News Notes of California Libraries, Winter 1972, pp. 26-86.

[6]Although not used as one of the nominal categories in the analysis, information was obtained as to the number of hours per month devoted to trustee duties and responsibilities. With 64 responses, range was 2-14 hours, with a mode of 2 hours, a median of 5 hours, and a mean of 5.3 hours.

[7]Ibid., pp. 105-249.

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vice, age, etc., could have been treated as continuous variables, they were considered only to be essentially classificatory and were measured on nominal scales. The response scales to the questions themselves were obviously ordinal. Therefore, the appropriate indicators of central tendency used to describe the findings were the mode and median, and the indicators of dispersion used were the variation ratio (v) and the decile range (d). Central tendency and dispersion for the entire sample have been summarized in Table I.

The indicator of the degree of relationship between the nominal categories and the ordinal responses to the questions used was the coefficient of differentiation.[8] This was computed only in those cases where the mode or median of the nominal group differed from that of the entire sample. The assumption was made that if these modes and medians did not differ, the degree of association between the nominal category and the ordinal response would be quite high. Only in the cases in which modes or medians differed did it seem useful to attempt to check the possible value of the nominal category as an explanation for the departure from the central tendency of the entire sample. Coefficients of differentiation have been given in Table II.

Inasmuch as the sample was a nonprobability one, inferences to the population sampled, i.e., all public library trustees in California, could not readily be tested. Therefore, applicability of the findings to other groups of trustees cannot be readily determined.

The first five questions in the instrument were related to the first item on Young's list, regarding employment of a competent and qualified librarian. Question one, specifically on this point, brought an overwhelming first priority response, with no differentiation among the nominal categories. The

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[8]Linton C. Freeman, Elementary Applied Statistics (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1965), pp. 108-19.

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TABLE I

Central Tendency and Dispersion for Entire Sample

Question	N	Mode	v	Median	d
1	70	1	.06	1	0
2	70	1	.54	2	2
3	70	1	.69	2	3
4	70	5	.50	4.5	3
5	70	5	.39	5	2
6	70	1	.20	1	2
7	69	1	.42	1	2
8	70	1	.31	1	2
9	69	5	.60	3	4
10	69	1 and 5	.49	3	4
11	70	5	.66	3	4
12	70	1 and 2	.31	2	2
13	69	2	.68	2	3
14	69	2	.70	2	4
15	69	3	.62	3	4
16	70	2	.63	2	2
17	70	1	.53	2	2
18	68	2	.50	2	2
19	68	2	.63	2	3
20	68	1	.57	2	4
21	69	2	.65	2	4
22	70	1	.37	1	2
23	70	1	.64	2	3
24	70	1	.60	2	3
25	70	1	.21	1	1
26	70	1	.21	1	2
27	70	1	.30	1	2
28	70	1	.43	1	4
29	68	1	.44	1	2
30	69	3	.71	3	4
31	69	1	.70	2	4
32	69	5	.71	4	3
33	69	4	.74	4	4
34	67	3	.54	3	2
35	69	3	.52	3	3

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TABLE II

Coefficients of Differentiation Where Central Tendency of Nominal Category Differed from That of the Entire Sample

Question	Length of Service	Occupation	Age	Sex	Educational Attainment	Type of Board	Size of Library
2	.25	.10	.17		.17		.09
3	.01	.10	.15	.29	.14	.13	.11
4	.10	.14	.08	.15	.16	.27	.21
5		.24	.13	.17			.25
7	.19	.09	.18			.37	.14
8		.13				.21	
9	.09	.21	.24	.01		.12	.17
10	.26	.10	.15	.05	.14	.11	.17
11		.33	.13			.43	.21
12	.14	.24	.12	.02		.21	.16
13	.19	.09	.11		.22	.07	.22
14	.20	.15	.08	.01	.07	.14	.22
15							.14
16	.01	.15	.15	.51	.31	.15	.18
17	.21	.12	.14	.51	.40	.15	.14
18		.29					
19	.17	.21	.07	.26		.15	.15
20		.15	.16		.20	.15	.17
21		.29	.17	.29	.23	.08	.12
22			.16			.30	.16
23			.10			.24	.25
24	.28	.10	.08			.20	.10
27						.29	
28	.17	.19	.17		.20	.37	.26
29		.07	.18		.12	.40	.24
30	.13	.08	.18	.06		.10	.10
31	.10		.21	.01		.10	.10
32	.12	.11	.14	.10	.13	.11	.16
33	.01	.12	.22	.02	.08	.07	.21
34							.07

second and third questions, dealing with the level and accreditation of the professional education of the library's professional employees, received first priority modal responses, but the medians were second priority. Differences occurred in the responses of several nominal categories, but the coefficient of differentiation in no case exceeded .25, suggesting a very low order of ability for the nominal categories as explainers of the differing responses.

Questions four and five sought to elicit the view of the trustee on the extent to which he should be actively involved in personnel matters relating to staff members other than the director. The central tendencies of the responses were "not properly a duty or responsibility of the . . . trustees," but not to an overwhelming degree. For example, 61 percent of the respondents evidently saw as appropriate the "active" participation of the trustees at some level of priority in the screening and selection of all full-time employees. Various nominal categories differed in response from the total sample, but the coefficient of differentiation did not exceed .27 in any case.

Questions six through eleven dealt generally with the role of the board in policy and program determination for the library. The sixth question related to the first part of Young's point three on determining the purposes of the library. Questions seven and eleven derived from Young's second point on determining and adopting written policies. The tenth question came from Young's eighth point on book and materials selection policies. Questions eight and nine were inspired by parts of the fourth point on Young's list, knowing the program and needs in relation to the community, and planning and executing the program.

Paradoxically, the entire sample gave strong first priority responses on determining and adopting goals, objectives, and written policies, but substantially different views prevailed in regard to written selection and personnel

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policies. Only 3 percent of the responses to question seven on written policies covering program and operation were "not properly a duty or responsibility," but 29 percent were in this category on written policies for materials selection and 33 percent on personnel policies. The responses to the tenth question, on materials selection policies, were especially interesting in light of the substantial lip service given in the literature to the importance of such policies. Only 27 percent of the sample saw this as a first priority matter, while 29 percent considered it not even a trustee responsibility.

Although not high, coefficients of differentiation in some of these areas were interesting. On written policies in general, the coefficient was .37 for type of board, with advisory and nominally administrative board members tending to place lower priority on their roles. On materials selection policies, the coefficient was .26 for length of service, with trustees having five years of service or less tending to see this as not a proper trustee responsibility, but with those having more than five years tending to give it relatively high priority. The coefficient of .43 for type of board on the matter of personnel policy determination again reflected the relative lack of concern of advisory and nominally administrative boards.

Questions eight and nine were intended to be revealing in terms of the extent of involvement trustees desire in relating the library program to the community, and in actually planning and executing the program. Many librarians may assume these to be primarily within their sphere, without any great amount of trustee involvement. Trustees gave strong first priority responses to their role in determining the program in relation to the community, with approximately 69 percent of the responses being of this nature. Approximately 40 percent of the respondents indicated that planning and carrying out the program of the library is not a proper concern for trustees, and the median response was for third priority. Therefore, about 60 percent of the sample apparently did

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regard this as an appropriate area for some degree of trustee involvement. Coefficients of differentiation were very low on these two questions, suggesting that the nominal categories were not good explicators of the differences in attitude shown.

The matter of cooperation with other libraries was addressed by questions twelve through fifteen. Although not specifically stated in Young's list, cooperation was seen as closely related to the general policy-making functions incorporated into points two, three, and four, alluded to above. Trustee attitudes were thought to be of particular interest in this area, since the recent professional ideology has been strongly favorable to the principle of cooperation among libraries.

High priority, i.e., first or second priority, was given to cooperation with other public libraries by 69 percent of the respondents. Although modes and medians were both in the second priority bracket for cooperation with local school libraries and college/university libraries, response was somewhat less enthusiastic than for other public libraries, with 62 percent and 50 percent respectively giving high, i.e., first or second, priority. Only 31 percent gave high priority to cooperative programs with special libraries. The high level of support implicit in this finding for cooperation with other public libraries was expected, as a result of the widespread support for such cooperation in California, and the existence of many such systems. The closely comparable level of support for cooperation with local school libraries was unexpected, however, and suggested that the relatively great "distance" between the public library and the school library implicit in professional associations and activities in California has not strongly influenced trustee thinking. The generally positive view of cooperation by public libraries with other types of libraries appeared to augur well for approaches to network development. A

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survey to see whether or not librarians attach a similar level of priority to inter-type of library cooperation would be of interest.

Differences in central tendency between various nominal categories and the entire sample existed for questions twelve through fourteen. However, coefficients of differentiation were not higher than .24, suggesting that differences in response had relatively little relationship to the nominal categories.

The sixteenth question was directly related to item eleven on the Young list, concerning awareness of services of the state library. Although the central tendency was for second priority, 93 percent of the respondents gave it at least third priority, implying that trustees assign considerable importance to this. Among the nominal categories, sex was a relatively strong predictor in the differences of priority assignment, with a differentiation coefficient of .51. Females tended to see awareness of state library services as more important than did males.

Keeping abreast of library standards and trends was the subject of the seventeenth question, derived from Young's fourth point. The overwhelming majority, approximately 97 percent, saw this as worthy of third priority or higher. Here again, sex was a comparatively strong predictor among the nominal categories, with females tending to give higher priority. With a differentiation coefficient of .40, educational attainment was a more significant predictor for response to this question than for any other. Those with a bachelor's degree or less tended to assign a higher priority than did those respondents holding a master's or doctor's degree.

Questions eighteen and nineteen, from Young's fifth point, related to trustee participation in public relations matters for the library. The central tendency for both questions was to assign second priority to this area,

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with active participation receiving somewhat less support than establishing the program. Coefficients of differentiation were low, suggesting little relationship between the various nominal categories and the differences in response.

The next three questions, twenty through twenty-two, were related to reporting on the activities of the library. Young dealt with this in points nine and twelve of her list. There was strong agreement on high priority for requiring that board meeting records be kept on file at the library. Relatively high priority was placed on reporting to governing officials, with 64 percent of the respondents placing it first or second. Agreement was almost as strong on the matter of reporting to the general public. In each of the latter cases, however, 21 percent of the respondents did not see this as a duty or responsibility of the board. Coefficients of differentiation were quite low, indicating that different viewpoints did not seem very closely related to the nominal categories studied.

Knowing laws related to libraries and supporting library legislation were the subjects of questions twenty-three and twenty-four, from the seventh point of Young's list. Both were given third or higher priority by large majorities, implying attribution of substantial importance. Differentiation coefficients were low.

Seventy-eight percent of the respondents gave first priority to attendance at all board meetings on question twenty-five, from Young's ninth point. No one gave it lower than third priority. Whether this high level of priority is borne out by actual records of attendance might be an interesting subject for further study.

Questions twenty-six through twenty-nine were related to duties and responsibilities of trustees in fiscal matters, derived from points three and six of Young's list. Agreement on first priority was strong, with both mode and

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median being in that response category for all questions. This was expected for the first two questions of the group. However, on question twenty-eight, 63 percent of the respondents giving first priority to active participation in budget preparation was deemed rather surprising. Only 16 percent indicated that active participation was inappropriate for the trustees. If this question was correctly interpreted by the respondents, it seemed to raise questions about the relationship between the board and the library director with respect to budget preparation. The role of fiscal "watchdog," implied by question twenty-nine, was totally rejected by only 2 out of 68 respondents, and 38 gave it first priority. While this role may be more apparent than real in practice, it seemed that trustees tend to take the matter quite seriously, something upon which library directors and staffs might reflect.

The only nominal category which appeared to have any potential significance relative to these questions was type of board. The coefficients of differentiation for the three questions were .29, .37, and .40. The respondents who were members of advisory boards tended to view these matters somewhat differently from those who were members of boards bearing administrative responsibility, with the former tending toward lower priority assignments.

The remaining questions all dealt with the general topic of membership in library associations and attendance at their meetings, the tenth item on Young's list of duties and responsibilities. Approximately 70 percent of the respondents assigned less than first priority to institutional memberships in national and state associations. Personal memberships in these associations were less than first priority for approximately 90 percent of the respondents. Attendance at association meetings was a less than first priority matter in the view of more than 90 percent of the trustees who responded. In general, trustees appeared to regard their library's and their own memberships in li-

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brary associations, and their own attendance at meetings, to be less than vital for the libraries they serve. As suggested by the general agreement on these matters, coefficients of differentiation for the various nominal categories were quite low.

As a means of summarizing the findings of the study and indicating directions for further research, several hypotheses were developed. They appeared to represent reasonably valid generalizations for the population consisting of public library trustees in California in the early 1970's. Assessment of their validity in other places and at other times would require additional study.

I. Trustees tend to place high priority on the employment of personnel holding professional degrees from A. L. A.-accredited schools.

II. Trustees tend to prefer not to be actively involved in the screening and selection of library employees other than the director.

III. Trustees tend to place high priority on their role in determination of objectives, goals, and policies for their libraries, except in connection with the selection of library materials and personnel matters.

IV. Trustees tend to be sharply divided as to whether policy determination on selection of library materials is a proper responsibility for the board.

V. Trustees tend to be sharply divided as to whether policy determination on personnel practices is a proper responsibility for the board.

VI. Trustees tend to place a high priority on their role in determining the library's program relative to its community.

VII. Trustees tend to be sharply divided as to whether planning and execution of the library's program is a proper responsibility for the board.

VIII. Trustees tend to be favorably disposed toward cooperation with other libraries, especially other public libraries and local school libraries.

IX. Trustees tend to recognize the importance of services offered by the state library agency.

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X. Trustees tend to recognize the importance of their awareness of library standards and trends.

XI. Trustees tend to assign lower than first priority to their role in the library's public relations program, and reporting to the general public.

XII. Trustees tend to recognize the importance of their knowing library laws and supporting appropriate pending legislation.

XIII. Trustees tend to desire a broad role in the funding process, including active participation in budget preparation.

XIV. Trustees tend to place high priority on their role as a fiscal "watch-dog" for the library.

XV. Trustees tend to attach relatively little importance to institutional and personal memberships in library associations, and attendance at meetings of such groups.

XVI. Length of service, occupation, age, sex, educational attainment, type of board, and size of library in terms of population potentially served, appear to have little value in predicting trustee views for most matters on which there is substantial difference of opinion.

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Length of service as a library trustee:_____ years.

Approximate amount of time per month devoted to library trustee duties and responsibilities:_____ hours.

Occupation_____

Please check appropriate categories:

Age: Under 21___. 21-30___. 31-40___. 41-50___. 51-60___. 61 or over___.

Sex: Male___. Female___.

Highest formal educational level completed: High school___. Junior College___. Bachelor's degree___. Master's degree___. Doctor's degree___.

According to your understanding, the board of trustees upon which you serve, or have served, is best described as:(1)___. Administrative, bearing full responsibility for library operation; library director is responsible to the board. (2)___. Nominally administrative, but with responsibility actually shared in large measure with city or county administrative officer; library director is primarily responsible to that officer in actual practice. (3)___. Advisory, with responsibility limited to making recommendations to the library director, who is responsible to the city or county administrative officer. (4)___. None of these. If this is the case, please describe the situation briefly on the back of this sheet.

Listed below are some possible duties and responsibilities of a library's board of trustees. Please indicate your personal estimate of the relative importance of each by circling the appropriate number preceding each item, using the following scale of priorities: (1) First priority; absolutely fundamental to the library's existence and operation. (2) Second priority; very important, but less so than first priority duties and responsibilities. (3) Third priority; desirable, but less important than second priority duties and responsibilities. (4) Fourth priority; quite unimportant to the library's existence and operation. (5) Not properly a duty or responsibility of the library's board of trustees.

1 2 3 4 5 (1) Employ a competent and qualified library director.

1 2 3 4 5 (2) Require that the library director and other professional employees hold a bachelor's or higher degree in librarianship.

1 2 3 4 5 (3) Require that the library director and other professional employees hold degrees from library schools accredited by the American Library Association.

1 2 3 4 5 (4) Actively participate in the screening and selection of library professional employees other than the director.

1 2 3 4 5 (5) Actively participate in the screening and selection of all full-time employees of the library.

1 2 3 4 5 (6) Determine the goals and objectives of the library.

1 2 3 4 5 (7) Determine and adopt written policies to govern the program and operation of the library.

1 2 3 4 5 (8) Determine the program and needs of the library in relation to the community.

1 2 3 4 5 (9) Plan and carry out the program of the library.

1 2 3 4 5 (10) Establish written policies covering the selection of books and other library materials.

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1 2 3 4 5 (11) Establish written policies covering the hiring, assignment, and termination of library employees.

1 2 3 4 5 (12) Support the library's participation in cooperative programs with other public libraries.

1 2 3 4 5 (13) Support the library's participation in cooperative programs with local school libraries.

1 2 3 4 5 (14) Support the library's participation in cooperative programs with college and university libraries.

1 2 3 4 5 (15) Support the library's participation in cooperative programs with special libraries, such as those owned and operated by private industries.

1 2 3 4 5 (16) Be aware of the services offered by the California State Library.

1 2 3 4 5 (17) Keep abreast of library standards and trends.

1 2 3 4 5 (18) Establish and support a planned public relations program for the library.

1 2 3 4 5 (19) Actively participate in the public relations program of the library.

1 2 3 4 5 (20) Report regularly to the appropriate governing officials.

1 2 3 4 5 (21) Report regularly to the general public.

1 2 3 4 5 (22) Require that accurate records of board meetings are kept on file in the library.

1 2 3 4 5 (23) Know local, state, and federal laws relative to library services.

1 2 3 4 5 (24) Actively support library legislation on state and federal levels.

1 2 3 4 5 (25) Attend all meetings of the library board of trustees.

1 2 3 4 5 (26) Secure adequate funds to carry on the program of the library.

1 2 3 4 5 (27) Adopt or reject the library's annual budget as prepared by the library director.

1 2 3 4 5 (28) Actively participate in the preparation of the library's annual budget.

1 2 3 4 5 (29) Verify that maximum value is received for all expenditures of library funds.

1 2 3 4 5 (30) Require that the library hold an institutional membership in the American Library Association.

1 2 3 4 5 (31) Require that the library hold an institutional membership in the California Library Association.

1 2 3 4 5 (32) Hold a personal membership in the American Library Association.

1 2 3 4 5 (33) Hold a personal membership in the California Library Association.

1 2 3 4 5 (34) Attend meetings of the American Library Association appropriate to the interests of trustees.

1 2 3 4 5 (35) Attend meetings of the California Library Association appropriate to the interests of trustees.